BOARD OF EDUCATION - BUDGET WORKSHOP

Tuesday, February 27, 2024
6:00 PM
Colchester Elementary School Cafeteria
(Livestream on YouTube Channel)

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Alexander Oliphant, Secretary Margo Gignac, Donna Antonacci, Michelle Millington, Stefanie Tracey-Calash, Rosemary Gignac. Student Board Member- Brooke Dean.

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Superintendent Daniel P. Sullivan, III, Assistant Superintendent Jessica Kuckel, Principal of Jack Jackter Intermediate School Elise Butson, Principal of Bacon Academy Amy Begué, Principal of Colchester Elementary School Judy O'Meara, Principal of William J. Johnston Middle School Christopher Bennett, Jack Jackter Intermediate School Assistant Principal Jennifer Reynolds, Colchester Elementary School Assistant Principal Meghan Amado, William J. Johnston Middle School Assistant Principal Stacy Ewings, Bacon Academy Assistant Principal Melissa Cyr, Bacon Academy Assistant Principal Michael Mal, Director of Pupil Services and Special Education Eve Hurley, Assistant Director of Pupil Services and Special Education Rebecca Tedesco, Bacon Academy Math Specialist Matthew Parsons, Bacon Academy Soccer Coach Skip Starks.

OTHERS PRESENT: Business Director Rachel Linkkila, Instructional Technology Coordinator Barbara Johnson, Director of Educational Operations Andrew Barillari , Executive Assistant to the Assistant Superintendent Michelle Flynn.

1. MEETING OPENING

1.1 Call to Order

Chair Alexander Oliphant called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM

1.2 Roll Call

1.3 Pledge of Allegiance

2. *PRIORITY DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

2.1 *Superintendent's Proposed Budget Presentation

Superintendent Sullivan presented his 2024-2025 School Year Budget. Superintendent Sullivan began the presentation with the October 1, 2023 report showing that the student enrollment was 2,161 students within the Colchester school district. There were 238 certified staff members and 181.75 non-certified staff members. Superintendent Sullivan pointed out the mission statement for the district is “We Create Innovative Thinkers for a Dynamic World.”
Superintendent Sullvan noted that when making budgetary decisions, the first thing the district looks at is any Legal/Statutory Obligations, what the district believes is “Right and best for students” and local priorities.
Superintendent Sullivan noted one of his first tasks when beginning in Colchester last year, was to take the time to meet with staff, students and families to identify the needs of the district. He then asked for volunteers to create some local focus groups to spotlight some key areas including “Trust, Image and Perception”, “Student Life” “Professional Culture”, “Bacon Academy Magnet”, and “Facilities.” Superintendent Sullivan pointed out the previous year has shown improvement in Academic Performance, School Safety, Student Supports as well as Student Opportunities.

Superintendent Sullivan introduced Assistant Superintendent Jessica Kuckel to present regarding the Academic Performance of students. Ms. Kuckel spoke regarding College and Career Readiness of Colchester students highlighting that 80.4% of students in grade 11 & 12 have met the College and Career Readiness benchmarks through SAT or ACT scores, AP or IB exam scores, or accumulating three or more dual enrollment credits during their high school tenure. She pointed out Science scores are up in grades 5, 8 and 11. Smarter Balance scores for Mathematics are up for grades 3-8 and the CT-SAT for grade 11. Ms. Kuckel also highlighted an opportunity to close the gap between High Needs and Non-High Needs students. Colchester is also exceeding State Level Performance.

Ms. Kuckel then discussed the Snapshot of Change in Academic Performance from 2022 to 2023. Colchester reported an increase in Literacy by .5, Mathematics by 2.0 and Science increased by 2.4. Colchester's mantra has been “Connected, Accepted and Ready To Learn” which requires a multi-tiered system of supports including Specialists, Mental Health Professionals, RBT’s, Class Size, Second Step and Time.

Ms. Kuckel then turned the presentation back over to Superintendent Sullivan who discussed School Safety, highlighting that each school is now staffed with a Safety Officer as well as a Door Attendant, Monitors, Cameras and Scanners, the use of the Raptor app, CSTAG training and Medical Training for staff.

Superintendent Sullivan presented student opportunities within Jack Jackter Intermediate school including JJIS being a “HOT SCHOOL,” offering Chorus, a Jazz Band, Band, Lego Robotics as well as Math Olympiad.
Within William J. Johnston Middle School, the students have six Interscholastic Athletic Teams, Band. Chorus, Chamber Choir, Robotics, Innovations as well as Design and Engineering.
Bacon Academy offers 20 Varsity Athletic Programs, 4 Choral Groups, 4 Instrumental Groups, Robotics, Drama, DECA as well as the National Honor Society. Bacon also offers College and Career Readiness opportunities through electives and college credit with 18 AP courses and over 50 Articulated Courses, Spanish, French and ASL, Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative as well as CTE: Woodworking, Engineering, Graphics and Automotive Technology.

Superintendent Sullivan discussed mandates and responsibilities of the district which include K-3 English Language Arts program, Special Education, Staff Evaluation Software, Cyber Insurance, a Security Audit as well as the Indoor Air Quality test.
Superintendent Sullivan highlighted the "Budget Drivers" which include Salaries and Benefits, Special Education, Maintenance of Facilities, Transportation Contracts as well as Athletics and Clubs. Superintendent Sullivan presented the Budget Driver Pie Chart showcasing the impact Salaries and Benefits have on the school budget. Superintendent Sullivan presented the 2024-2025 school budget will have the addition of two full time Registered Behavioral Technicians with the combined salaries totalling $79,332 in order for the district to continue to meet Special Education programming needs.

The next slide Superintendent Sullivan presented was the NCE (Net Current Expenditures) which are calculated as "all current public elementary and secondary expenditures for all sources, excluding reimbursable regular education transportation, tuition revenue, capital expenditures for land, buildings and equipment and debt service.

Superintendent Sullivan indicated that our reference group (DRG D) has some districts that have a higher per-pupil costs and some have a lower cost. Superintendent Sullivan indicated that Colchester is falling in an appropriate place as far as cost is concerned while still maintaining academic performance.

Superintendent Sullivan discussed past budgets and allocations in regards to the history of budgets. He also reminded us that this was the Superintendent's Proposed Budget and the board will use this as well as the next workshop and community input to determine what budget the board will choose to adopt.

In closing, Superintendent Sullivan presented the budget as $45,726,075 which is a 3.97% increase from the previous year. In the previous budget season, the Board of Finance agreed to remove the Honeywell payment of $212,236.00 as well as removing the Out of District Tuition in the amount of $600,000.00. This subtracted $812,236.00 from the 2023-2024 school budget. This year, the proposed budget will return $429,423.00 from Out of District costs making the budget 3.97% rather than 3.00%. Superintendent Sullivan thanked the Board as well as the District Leadership Team.

2.2 *Discussion and Possible Action on the 2024-2025 Budget

Motion by: M.Gignac
To take a ten minute recess
Seconded by: S. Tracey-Calash
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

The board took a ten minute recess at 6:26 PM.
The meeting was reconvened at 6:36 PM.

Board Chair Alex opened the floor for questions and discussion.
Superintendent Sullivan announced that the 2024-2025 School Year Budget documents are listed on the district website at colchesterct.org.

D. Antonacci commented that part of the *School Budget VS inflation 2024* document listed on the website was missing a few statistics.
M. Millington asked for clarification regarding the reduction in Special Education costs. Superintendent Sullivan explained that there was a situation involving a student who had a placement in a facility that was not eligible for excess cost reimbursement as well as a student who was not placed in an appropriate placement. The district was able to address those issues with the families of the students. Superintendent Sullivan explained that these two situations were not eligible for reimbursement last year.
M. Gignac stated that while this was the first time the board was seeing the budget, she thanked all that are involved in creating the budget as well as including the details and comparisons.
M. Millington echoed that comment.
S. Tracey-Calash asked for clarification regarding the tuition reimbursement expectations. Business Director R. Linkkila explained that the funds are paid directly to the town, not the Board of Education. R. Linkkila also stated that the district has billed other districts for the first two quarters of the school year. Superintendent Sullivan stated that a big part of the out of district tuition reimbursement has historically been from Norwich. Norwich no longer approves students to attend Bacon. Colchester hopes to add Salem, Franklin and Bozrah to the list of local towns to approve sending their residents to Bacon Academy for High School.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

3.1 For Public Comments, Please See Bylaw on Meeting Conduct

Matthew Parsons stated he wished to remind the board of the Capital Plan from the previous meeting. He pointed out that there are many projects that need to be completed.

Skip Starks spoke in regards to the Capital Plan as well as the state of the Athletic Complex at Bacon Academy.

Jeremy McKenzie discussed the importance of remembering the previous year's budget process. He expressed concern in regards to the state of the schools. He appreciated the presentation in regards to the Capital Plan & thanked those involved. He also commented the district should address the Athletic Complex & his desire to readdress the “Pay To Play” as well as the “Gifted and Talented” program.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by: M.Gignac
To adjourn
Seconded by: S. Tracey-Calash
Roll Call: All in favor
Vote: Motion carried

Chair Oliphant adjourned the meeting at 6:53 PM

The next Board of Education Budget Workshop will be held on Saturday, March 9, 2024 in the Cafeteria at the Colchester Elementary School beginning at 9:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Flynn
Executive Assistant to the Assistant Superintendent